Brookline

Historical Research

and Writing Guide

For 7th and 8th Graders

INTRODUCTION

**What is History writing all about?**

One of the myths of studying history is that we can *truly* know what happened in the past. The only truth is that we cannot accurately recreate the past; we can only interpret the discoverable evidence of past events. While certain facts are indisputable, the way in which we view them changes. Sometimes a new piece of evidence surfaces that challenges our previous beliefs. Sometimes new technologies allow us to gather information that was previously unavailable. Often, current events prompt us to ask different questions about the past and because of this, perhaps, our own view of our world changes.

Two historians can take the same piece of evidence and arrive at different interpretations based on their own perspectives and life experiences. Historians therefore must call upon multiple pieces of evidence and use careful reasoning to make sure that they are not misrepresenting the past. Therefore, when you write in History class, you must also use multiple sources and carefully evaluate evidence in order to provide strong support for your interpretation of past events.

**Historical Writing vs. Creative Writing**

Unlike the units you may undertake in English class such as poetry and fiction, your writing in history class does not simply discuss personal beliefs and creative ideas. Historical Writing employs prior knowledge and **evidence** to draw conclusions about the process of change and its impact. Think of yourself as a lawyer trying to convince a jury to share your understanding about what happened rather than a storyteller trying to entertain. Lawyers must be creative and exciting, but if they do not analyze and interpret evidence logically, they will lose their case. Historians must also strike a delicate balance between passionate storytelling and logical interpretation of evidence.

**Why Write?**

You will be asked to write historical essays throughout high school and college, so building a solid foundation in middle school will be helpful to you throughout your life. It has been proven that a college student who can write a concise and clear 3-5 page essay has a much greater chance for academic success, no matter what field they specialize in. This guide will equip you with the tools you'll need to conduct effective research and write clear and well-organized essays supported by historical evidence. We will start with crafting a clear concise, well-supported paragraph and build to a longer, independently researched essay.

**“I’m not planning to be a historian when I grow up, so why would I ever need the skills of a historian?” you might ask.**

Historical thinking, research and writing skills will be useful in nearly any future career.

The ability to examine a wide array of information, select which information is most valuable to you, form an argument, and debate your point of view in a clear and forceful way is a NECESSARY skill in our information-based society. Research has shown that through the process of learning how to write in a clear and well-organized manner, students improve their ability to think and argue with clarity and persuasiveness.

Writing an historical essay will also give you a much deeper and richer understanding of the past. Connecting events from the past and linking them to present issues will give you a much broader view of the world around you.

This guide will help you develop the necessary skills to think and write historically. These skills include:

• Pre-searching --- formulating questions and identifying and selecting initial sources.

• Researching--- finding, collecting, selecting, and judging the value of information. In a world where information is abundantly available, this skill is useful because it will allow you to figure out what information you need and what information you can ignore.

• Close reading of texts to engage with the ideas in order to uncover evidence and begin to identify your own interpretation

• Making judgments— understanding the difference between a well-supported argument and a weak or biased argument.

• Arguing persuasively — convincing people of the strength of your conclusions through the quality of your evidence.

• Writing concisely — identifying your thesis (main idea) and maintaining focus on it throughout your historical essay

Understanding Your Audience and Purpose--

Quick Reference Guide

Different types of writing assignments have different goals and require different sets of skills. By understanding the expectations of your audience before you start researching and writing, the entire process will become easier and clearer. You can change your tone, the types of sources you use, the organization of arguments, and the evidence based on the goal of the assignment.

Use the following chart if you are confused about the expectations of an assignment, and, as always, ask your teacher.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| TYPE of ASSIGNMENT | GOAL and EXPECTATIONS  of assignment | EXAMPLES |
| Argumentative Paragraph | A short, clear, and concise piece of writing that makes an ARGUMENT and uses EVIDENCE to EXPLAIN to the reader why that argument is correct.  Use specific evidence from the source and elaborate how that evidence supports your argument.  LENGTH: Paragraph should be between 8-10 sentences long.  TONE: Write like a lawyer. You are using evidence to PROVE that your view of the past is correct. Be serious and focused. | Most paragraphs that we write in history class are argument paragraphs unless otherwise stated. |

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| TYPE of ASSIGNMENT | GOALS and EXPECTATIONS of assignment | EXAMPLES |
| Argumentative Application Essay | To choose a thesis statement from a given list and to locate and explain evidence that supports this statement.  EVIDENCE: The teacher will *usually* give you the sources, so this type of essay rarely requires original research.  TONE: Lawyerly, same as argument paragraph.  LENGTH: Usually five (5) paragraphs long, or over 2 pages if double-spaced. | Essays with an assigned historical interpretation or viewpoint. |
| Argumentative Research Project or Essay | To select a topic, discover what is interesting about the topic, develop research questions, locate sources, take notes on those sources, organize your ideas, and then produce an essay or other assignment that clearly explains what you discovered and its importance  EVIDENCE: You must locate your own evidence and tell the audience where you found it.  TONE: Lawyerly, same as argument paragraph.  LENGTH: Depends on assignment. | Any assignment where you choose a topic, locate sources, and develop an argument independently. |

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| TYPE of ASSIGNMENT | GOALS and EXPECTATIONS of assignment | EXAMPLES |
| Persuasive Speech | To convince the audience that your **opinion** is correct. You must still use specific evidence, but you can select only the evidence that matches with your viewpoint.  TONE: This is the major difference. Instead of sounding like a lawyer, you should either sound like a passionate politician or a salesman on an infomercial. | Performance based assignments like speeches, debates, mock trials. |
| Reading Comprehension Paragraph | Only testing your ability to understand a reading, not to make an original argument. Refer back to reading frequently. | MCAS open response, textbook readings |
| Historical Diary Entry or Historic Letter | Creative writing showing that you understand what it would be like to be alive during that time period.  Focus on aspects of daily life, including what you would see, smell, taste, wear, and read, how you would travel and communicate, etc.  TONE: Write in a conversational first person style. | Diary entries, letters, first person retellings of historical events |
| Historic Newspaper Articles | To report on the past as if it just happened. You should clearly explain "just the facts" and how different people felt about the event.  TONE: Detached reporting of the who, what, when, where, and why. | Newspaper Report |

ARGUMENTATIVE PARAGRAPHS

In previous years, you have already learned how to write paragraphs. The goal is to continue to develop this skill through constant practice and revision. Paragraphs are the building blocks of solid essays and present an argument supported by evidence.

As stated before, these skills are not new, but the tasks are becoming more complex.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 6th grade paragraphs | 7/8th grade paragraphs |
| How many sentences should each paragraph be? | 5-8 sentences | 8-10 sentences |
| What goes at the beginning of the paragraph? | Topic sentence | An arguable topic sentence |
| How many pieces of evidence should each paragraph contain? | 2-3 | 3 or more |
| What goes at the end of the paragraph? | A concluding sentence | A concluding sentence |

The argumentative paragraph is not too much different from the paragraphs you have been writing for years. The structure is the same, but it requires more information and a slightly different tone.

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

Topic Sentence—Seeks to answer the question using language from the question.

*Your topic sentence ought to state an arguable position.*

*Example Question: What impact did Thomas Edison have on industrialization in the Gilded Age?*

***Arguable position: "Thomas Edison’s research lab changed the process of invention."***

PARAGRAPH BODY—Supporting Ideas and Evidence

Well-written paragraphs usually include at least **three (3) supporting ideas backed up with three (3) pieces of evidence** that support your main idea followed by **elaboration that connects your evidence to the argument contained in your topic sentence**.

This means you will most likely need 5-6 sentences to adequately explain both your evidence and its connection to your topic sentence.

*Examples of evidence might include a quote, a specific fact, or an idea.*

*Example of specific evidence with elaboration:*

*“Edison systematized the invention process. Dozens of Edison’s research assistants experimented around the clock to test many materials before they discovered that tungsten would work as a filament in the electric light bulb. This differed greatly from the lone experimenter tinkering away in his garage.”*

Concluding Sentence

Explain the significance of your main idea.

*Restate what the paragraph is about and make sure that the reader understands why your argument matters.*

*Example: “Edison’s Menlo Park laboratory serves as a model for the modern research and development corporations.”*

PARAGRAPH GRAPHIC ORGANIZER: Option A

QUESTION: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Topic Sentence=Specific Topic + Focusing Main Idea:

Evidence from source:

Elaboration:

Elaboration:

Evidence from source:

Elaboration:

Evidence from source:

Supporting Idea:

Supporting Idea:

Supporting Idea:

Concluding Statement:

PARAGRAPH GRAPHIC ORGANIZER--EXAMPLE

QUESTION: What impact did Thomas Edison have on industrialization in the Gilded Age?

Topic Sentence=Specific Topic + Focusing Main Idea:

*Thomas Edison’s research lab systematized the process of invention.*

Evidence from source:

Dozens of research assistants—worked long hours.

Elaboration:

Used to just be individuals tinkering in workshops.

Elaboration:

Scientific method now applied to developing consumer products.

Evidence from source:

Thousands of materials were tried before tungsten.

Elaboration:

Quote shows Edison did not rely on flashes of brilliance or luck.

Evidence from source:

“Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.”

Supporting Idea:

Tried many materials before happening on right one.

Supporting Idea:

Many research assistants

Supporting Idea:

Tungsten in electric lightbulbs.

Concluding Statement:

By systematizing the inventing process, Thomas Edison’s Menlo Park laboratory continues to serve as a model for modern research and development corporations.

PARAGRAPH GRAPHIC ORGANIZER: Option B

QUESTION: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Concluding Statement:

Detail/Idea:

Detail/Idea:

Detail/ Idea:

Topic Sentence=Specific Topic + Focusing Idea:

Evidence and elaboration:

Evidence and elaboration:

Evidence and Elaboration:

PARAGRAPH EXEMPLAR

Question: What impact did Thomas Edison have on industrialization in the Gilded Age?

Thomas Edison’s research laboratory systematized the invention process and increased the number of consumer goods available. Thomas Edison was one of the first to employ dozens of research assistants who worked long hours systematically tweaking different parts of an invention to make it run smoothly. Before Edison, most inventions were the product of a lone tinkerer. His research assistants would try many different types of materials before stumbling on the best one. As Edison said, “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.” His lab did not rely only on luck or flashes of brilliance to create a new product, and expected to fail far more than they succeeded. For example, the research lab tried thousands of different materials before discovering that tungsten could be used as a filament in electric light bulbs. By systematizing the invention process, Thomas Edison’s Menlo Park increased the number of invention available to consumers and continues to serve as the model for the modern research and development corporation.

STYLE GUIDE FOR PARAGRAPH AND ESSAY WRITING

These tips focus on style rather than organization. These will help strengthen your history writing by making you sound like you are making an argument based on evidence rather than opinion.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| STYLE TIPS: | EXAMPLE of IMPROPER STYLE: | CONCISE, CLEAR, and CONFIDENT EXAMPLE: |
| You are proving a point, so it helps if you believe it. Therefore, do not sound wishy-washy.  To sound firm, avoid the following phrases:  --Maybe  --Probably  --I think  --I believe  --It is my opinion  that… | *“I think that Thomas Edison's research lab probably changed the process of invention."* | "Thomas Edison’s research lab changed the process of invention." |
| Do not write in the first person.  It creates the impression that your argument is an opinion, not a well-reasoned argument supported by historical evidence. | *"I think that James Madison influenced the writing of the Constitution by writing the Virginia Plan."* | "James Madison influenced the writing of the Constitution by writing the Virginia Plan." |
| Do not ask and then answer your own questions. | *"Why was Alice Paul arrested? I'll tell you."* | "Alice Paul was arrested because she picketed outside the White House to pressure President Wilson into supporting the vote for Women during World War I." |
| Explain how quotes support your topic sentence. | ...As Edison said, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." As you can see, Edison changed the process of invention. | ...As Edison said, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." By testing and redesigning inventions hundreds of time, Edison revolutionized how products became available to consumers. |

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| STYLE TIPS: | EXAMPLE of IMPROPER STYLE: | CONCISE, CLEAR, and CONFIDENT EXAMPLE: |
| Do not include sentences that do not help to support your argument. | *"James Madison helped draft the amendments that became the Bill of Rights. He also weighed only 95 pounds!"* | "James Madison helped draft the amendments that became the Bill of Rights. He borrowed heavily from state constitutions." |
| When using words like **we** or **you**, be clear who you mean.  We could mean students, Americans, or human beings? | *"We need to protect the freedom of speech for everyone, including those with unpopular ideas. Otherwise, we will endanger the freedom of everyone."* | "American needs to protect the freedom of speech for everyone, including those with unpopular ideas. Otherwise, we will endanger the freedom of all American citizens." |
| Do NOT begin a paragraph with the phrase:  "In this paragraph I will talk about..." | *"In this paragraph I will talk about Thomas Edison and his impact on invention."* | "Thomas Edison’s research lab changed the process of invention." |
| Do not use “text speak:”  --Ellipses (...)  --Chat-Speak (LOL, G2G, BTW)  --Multiple Exclamation points (!!!) | *"BTW, James Madison was very small...he only weighed 95 pounds!!!!"* | "James Madison weighed only 95 pounds, making him America's smallest President." |
| USE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE | *"Freedom of speech is a really big thing that everyone thinks is really important, back then and today."* | See the next page. |

SPECIFIC LANGUAGE

The style tips on the previous page seek to help you make your writing stronger by making it clear, concise, and confident. Yet the most common way that students weaken their writing is by using non-specific language that does not express their true meaning.

Non-specific language does not mean putting the wrong answer. It means using a generic, non-descriptive word that could have several meanings. By recognizing these words and replacing them with more descriptive words, you will strengthen your writing considerably.

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| FREQUENTLY USED NON-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE | EXPLANATION of  WHY THIS WORD CHOICE IS CONFUSING. |
| Good  Bad | Andrew Carnegie was bad to his workers.  *How, exactly, was he bad to them? In what ways did he hurt them?* |
| Thing  Stuff  Something | "Industrialization was a really important thing."  *What type of "thing?" Important to whom? What influence did it have?* |
| Big  Small | "George Washington was one of the big Presidents."  *Was he 40 ft. tall? 600 pounds? Or was he influential on later Presidents?* |
| Everyone  Men  Women  People | "Everyone bought cars in the 1920s when they became cheaper."  *BE CAREFUL! Did every single American purchase a car, or just more middle-class families?* |
| A lot  Many  Really | "Many people died of the 1918 flu pandemic."  *If you know the number, use it!* |
| At a time  Back then  In the past  A long time ago | "The Gold Rush sped up Westward Expansion back then."  *If you know the time period, include it in your writing. You could say the 1850s, the decades before the Civil War, etc.* |
| This  That | “This shows…”--*Put a noun after these words to add clarity* |

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROPER AND IMPROPER STYLE

Directions: Edit this paragraph to get rid of the unclear and confusing language.

In this paragraph I will talk about how Thomas Edison’s research lab changed the process of invention. I will then relate that to how there was more stuff to buy afterwards. Thomas Edison had a really big lab full of lots of researchers. Why did he have so many researchers? He needed them to try thousands of designs before they stumbled on the best one. Before Edison, most inventions were probably jus the product of a lone tinkerer. Thomas Edison grew up in Michigan, just like his friend Henry Ford. His research assistants would try many different types of materials before stumbling on the best one. As Edison said, “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.” For example, the research lab tried thousands of different things before discovering that tungsten could be used as a filament in electric light bulbs!!!! By systematizing the invention process, Thomas Edison’s Menlo Park increased the amount of stuff available to people. And that’s the end of my paragraph on Edison. I found writing this paragraph fun and educational.

USING QUOTATIONS AS EVIDENCE

One of the surest ways to add strength to your evidence is through a quotation. By quoting, you are demonstrating familiarity with a source, and giving specific evidence to back up your point of view. However, you do not want to add too many quotes, either, or it will look like you do not have any ideas of your own.

Here are some good rules of thumb on when to quote:

A. Use many quotes when analyzing a specific piece of writing, such as a primary source or a literary work.

B. Use quotes if you want to show someone's viewpoint during a time period, such as a newspaper report responding to a historical event.

C. Use quotes if you are disagreeing with a source, so that the source's case is stated fairly.

HOW TO USE A QUOTATION:

1. Introduce the quote to give context.

*Example: Alice Paul referred to her own commitment to suffrage by saying, “I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality.”*

1. Quote only the text that you need, keeping the quote as short as possible. Use ellipses to shorten quotes.

*Example: Alice Paul stated, “I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction… there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality.”*

3. Weave the quote into your own text when possible.

*Example: Alice Paul dismissed arguments about the unique role of women, stating, “there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality,” and used that conviction to pressure lawmakers for nothing less than a constitutional amendment.*

4. If using a quote longer than four lines of text, single space it and reduce the margins on each side by ½ inch, making a block quote.

5. **MOST IMPORTANTLY,** explain for the reader why that quote helps to prove your argument. Do not assume that the quote explains itself.

ESSAY WRITING

Once you’ve mastered the individual argumentative paragraph, it’s time to stretch those skills out and start building multiple paragraph assignments. The most common form of multiple-paragraph writing is the 5-paragraph essay with a thesis statement.

An 5 paragraph essay is made up of different building blocks, just like the paragraph.

INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

Your introduction should have the following components:

\* Hook: hook the reader in some manner, for instance with intriguing **background information, a historical anecdote, surprising statistics, or a dramatic quote**. This will provide a context for your thesis, help you set up your main ideas and draw your readers into your thinking.

\* **Outline of main ideas**. Briefly preview the arguments you will make in your body paragraphs so your reader has an overview of your presentation points.

\* **Thesis statement.** The thesis statement is the arguable claim/overall point you are trying to make in your paper. All of the main ideas and evidence in the rest of the essay should connect back to this thesis statement.

***HELPFUL HINT:*** *It is a good idea to underline your thesis statement so that you are reminded of the overall point you are trying to make and do not lose focus.*

THE BODY PARAGRAPHS

In a five-paragraph essay, this section is three (3) paragraphs long.

Each section (or in our case, paragraph) of the body should explain one argument that helps further prove your thesis and should include the following elements:

**\* Topic Sentence-** The topic sentence states the main idea/argument for the paragraph.

**\* Supporting Ideas—**three ideas that explain the main idea

**\* Evidence-** Evidence might be facts, examples, direct quotations, etc. Each body paragraph should have at least three (3) pieces of evidence that support your main idea.

\* **Elaboration-**Explain how each piece of evidence connects to your topic sentence or thesis.

\***Concluding Sentence**. This sentence should wrap up the argument you made in the paragraph or help you transition to the next argument.

***HELPFUL HINT:*** *Remember, when directly quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing or including statistics, provide the proper citation.*

THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

The Conclusion is an opportunity to consolidate your understanding of the topic you researched and add further significance. Include the following:

\* **Thesis statement reiterated**. This is a paraphrase of your original thesis statement.

\* **Review your main ideas**. You should review the arguments made in the body of your essay highlighting what you have claimed as proof of your thesis statement.

\***Reflection.** Your final sentence(s) should move beyond the arguments you made to connect to some larger idea. For example, you could link to a present issue or another historical moment, state some questions for future research or make a more general historical judgment.

THESIS WRITING

The most important piece of your essay is your thesis.

A thesis statement is an arguable assertion that you will prove by creating arguments or main ideas supported by the evidence that you have gathered. "Arguable" means that another researcher might uncover or reinterpret the same evidence to come to a different conclusion.

A **THESIS** **STATEMENT** is different from a topic sentence; it answers the main question that you plan to discuss in your paper. The thesis statement should be broad enough so that you can make several arguments in support of it, but narrow enough so that you can prove it in the assigned number of pages. All of your arguments will connect back to this thesis statement, since this is what you are setting out to prove.

The first few essays you write will be application essays, meaning that you will simply choose from a menu of thesis statements. As you become more skilled at using the thesis statement, you will learn how to write your own based on your own research. Even when working on an application essay, it is important to be able to recognize what is and what is not a proficient thesis statement.

ELEMENTS OF A PROFICIENT THESIS STATEMENT:

Specific subject + Limited Focus + Supporting Evidence = Strong Thesis Statement

TIPS FOR CHOOSING A THESIS STATEMENT:

1. It must be arguable. A fact is not a thesis statement.
2. It must be provable. If you do not have the evidence to support a thesis statement, than you must change it to match the available evidence.
3. It should sound academic. This means using clear and specific language.
4. It should be specific. Since most assignments you will write are less than 5 pages, your thesis statement should be narrow enough to be proven in only a few paragraphs.

THESIS STATEMENT EXAMPLES:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| NOT a thesis statement | “John Rockefeller was in the oil industry.”  *(This is not an argument. He controlled 90% of the oil industry)* |
| Emerging Thesis Statement | “I think that John Rockefeller was a bad businessman.”  *(This is an unfocused opinion since it uses unspecific language. It also uses “I think.”)* |
| Developing Thesis Statement | “John Rockefeller was a Robber Baron because he had a negative effect on the economy and his employees.”  *(This argument is too broad; it would take dozens of paragraphs to prove this.)* |
| Proficient Thesis Statement | “John Rockefeller’s unfair business practices made him into the most successful Robber Baron of the Gilded Age.”  *(Clear argument that could be proven in a few paragraphs. Reader knows they will be looking for unfair business practices during a specific time period to judge your argument.)* |

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| Not a thesis statement | “The British taxed the Americans without their consent.” |
| Emerging Thesis Statement | “The British treated the Americans unfairly.” |
| Developing Thesis Statement | “British taxes on the American colonies were unfair.” |
| Proficient Thesis Statement | “British policies forced the Americans to use public protests to assert their rights.” |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Not a thesis statement | Women wore hoop skirts in the 1800s. |
| Emerging Thesis Statement | Wealthy women wore more restrictive clothing than poor women in the 1800s. |
| Developing Thesis Statement | Wealthy women had to wear very restrictive clothing in order to be accepted in the 1800s. |
| Proficient Thesis Statement  (Example 1) | Wealthy women often wore dangerously restrictive clothing in the 1800s to fit in with society’s expectations that women should not work. |
| Proficient Thesis Statement  (Example 2) | As industrialization made clothing materials cheaper, wealthy women wore increasingly ornamental clothing to differentiate themselves from working class women. |

For this last example, notice that two different authors interpreted the evidence differently. Both noticed an increase in how cumbersome women’s clothing became, but have found different interpretations for why that trend took place. Both authors will need to come up with different body paragraphs to support their arguments.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Thesis Example 1: *Wealthy women often wore dangerously restrictive clothing in the 1800s to fit in with society’s expectations that women should not work.*  *Paragraph A: Roles of wealthy women*  *Paragraph B: Clothing Trends*  *Paragraph C: Health and lifestyle effects cause by clothing*  *Concluding Paragraph* | Thesis Example 2: *As industrialization made clothing materials cheaper, wealthy women wore increasingly ornamental clothing to differentiate themselves from working class women.*  *Paragraph A: Industrialization changes*  *clothing*  *Paragraph B: Changes in social classes*  *Paragraph C: Class differences in clothing*  *Concluding Paragraph* |

These are just two possibilities, but your arguments will depend on the evidence available to you and your interpretation of that evidence.

DIFFERENTIATION IN ESSAY WRITING

Note: This page is meant as a discussion starter for teachers, rather than as a tool for students to use.

When writing an essay, there are several ways to differentiate the complexity and the workload for students. As students move through 7th and 8th grade, the amount of scaffolding should decrease over time. But what that looks like could differ for each student or group.

Below, you will find a list of ideas that Brookline teachers have used to allow all students to succeed on complex writing assignments:

I. Organization:

--Increase the number of organizers that students have to fill out. This will force them to have their essay fully planned before typing. Heavily scaffolded essays could have one organizer per paragraph, and could have complete sentences on the organizers.

--Allow for self-differentiation in organizers. Present the options on page 23, describing what type of learner each organizer is for.

II. Content:

--Give the students a thesis statement, or give them a menu of thesis statements to select from.

--The same goes for arguments in the body paragraphs.

--Scaffolded information in body paragraphs.

III. Gathering Evidence:

--Provide students with a “source packet,” or explicitly direct them to the pages/handouts required to complete the assignment.

--Provide students with a two-column notes sheet or a research sheet to write down evidence that could potentially be used in the essay. Have them rank the evidence’s value.

IV. Workload:

--Have students only type some of the required paragraphs, but have them complete the entire organizer/outline.

--Reduce the required skills. For example, some students might not need to include citations or a counter-argument paragraph.

--Extended time, excuse the next assignment, etc.

V. Other ways to keep students on track:

--Checklists, one-on-one conferences, explicit instruction about each phase of essay writing.

ORGANIZING YOUR ESSAY

Organizing your essay is an absolutely necessary step. Essays are complex, and writing without organizing your evidence and interpretations will lead to a sloppy, unfocused, and confusing essay with an unproven thesis statement.

*How* you organize your essay is largely up to you, though. As you gain awareness about your writing style, you can self-select from these popular choices:

1. One-page graphic organizer: Perfect for those students who like to form their sentences while typing. Since there is limited space, you will write down notes about your arguments and which pieces of evidence you will use. Most of your revising will take place after you have typed your essay. ALSO, if there is not enough space, you can always copy this organizer onto an 11x17 sheet of paper!
2. Multi-page graphic organizers: Perfect for those students who get stuck or distracted while at the computer. Since you write down more detail and even complete sentences, your graphic organizers become more like a first draft and typing is simple and straightforward. After you type, you will hopefully just need to edit for grammatical mistakes.
3. Outline: For students who feel comfortable with essay writing, this method provides a little more flexibility. You can include more or less evidence per paragraph depending on the strength of your evidence. It’s best to start with organizers, but if you find them too restrictive you can move towards this method.

ONE-PAGE ORGANIZER FOR 5-PARAGRAPH ESSAYS

THESIS STATEMENT:

CONCLUDING IDEAS (restate thesis, review arguments, add reflection or deeper connections):

Topic Sentence:

Evidence:

Transition/Connection to thesis:

Topic Sentence:

Evidence:

Transition/Connection to thesis:

Topic Sentence:

Evidence:

Transition/Connection to thesis:

Background Information (Hook, historical context, preview arguments):

MULTIPLE PAGE GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

DIRECTIONS: Every paragraph in your organizer will get it’s own graphic organizer. Below you will find organizers for an introduction paragraph and a concluding paragraph. For the body paragraphs, use the one paragraph graphic organizer, but remember that your concluding sentence needs to be a transition to the next paragraph!

INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

Hook (Interesting quote, background information, anecdote, statistic, etc. that will help someone understand topic):

THESIS: (Topic + Argument + Supporting Evidence)

Three Arguments in Body Paragraphs:

1.

2.

3.

Background info—what does someone need to know to understand what you are talking about? Try to explain in 2-3 sentences.

Who? Where?

What? Why?

When? How?

CONCLUDING GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Quickly Review your Three Arguments:

1.

2.

3.

Restate Thesis Statement:

REFLECTION: Difficult, but choose at least one of the following:

A. Connect to present trend or event, making connections between then and now:

B. Connect to other historical trend or event, showing similarities:

C. State a question or other evidence that you could use that could change your argument:

D. Make a prediction about the meaning of your argument:

Use conclusion to leave readers thinking about your idea, not adding new arguments.

OUTLINE WRITING

**TITLE OF ESSAY:**

**I. Introduction**

A. Background information/Hook

B. Introduce at least three main ideas that will support your thesis.

C. *THESIS STATEMENT*

**II. Focusing Paragraph #1**

A. Topic Sentence--gives the reader an understanding of the main idea discussed in this paragraph

1. Supporting Idea 1

a. Evidence from source

b. Elaboration

2. Supporting Idea 2

a. Evidence from source

b. Elaboration

3. Supporting Idea 3

a. Evidence from source

b. Elaboration

B. Concluding Sentence--options to consider:

1. Restate topic sentence

2. Transition to the next paragraph

**III. Focusing Paragraph #2**

A. Topic Sentence--gives the reader an understanding of the main idea discussed in this paragraph

1. Supporting Idea 1

a. Evidence from source

b. Elaboration

2. Supporting Idea 2

a. Evidence from source

b. Elaboration

3. Supporting Idea 3

a. Evidence from source

b. Elaboration

B. Concluding Sentence--options to consider:

1. Restate topic sentence

2. Transition to the next paragraph

**IV. Focusing Paragraph #3...same format at other focusing paragraphs**

**V. Concluding Paragraph**

A. Restate your thesis statement

B. Review the main ideas you've developed (focusing paragraphs)

C. Conclude--options to consider

1. Connect to present day issue

2. Connect to another historical event that helps to give context to your argument.

3. Draw a broader conclusion about why your topic is important

4. Pose a question for further research that might change your argument.

ESSAY WRITING CHECKLIST

\_\_\_\_Introduction has an interesting hook that helps explain the topic

\_\_\_\_Introduction provides the reader with background or lead-in information to give historical context

\_\_\_\_Introduction previews main ideas in the essay.

\_\_\_\_Introduction includes a clear thesis statement.

\_\_\_\_All body paragraphs have an argumentative topic sentence.

\_\_\_\_Each paragraph has at least three ideas that support the topic sentence.

\_\_\_\_Each paragraph has specific evidence to support the topic sentence

\_\_\_\_Each piece of specific evidence is elaborated by explaining how it connects to your argument.

\_\_\_\_All quotes have a clear connection to the main ideas and/or thesis argument and are explained.

\_\_\_\_ Final sentences of each body paragraph connect back to the thesis and/or transition into the next body paragraph.

\_\_\_\_Thesis restated in the essay conclusion.

\_\_\_\_The essay conclusion reviews all main ideas and connects to a larger idea.

\_\_\_\_The paper contains no avoidable errors, such as: spelling errors, sentence fragments,

run-on sentences, etc.

\_\_\_\_**Essay sets the proper tone by following all the style tips**

\_\_\_\_ A complete and accurate bibliography of sources is included at the end of the paper.

\_\_\_\_Specific facts and quotes contain the appropriate citations.

\_\_\_\_ The essay has an appropriate title (matches tone of essay, provides understanding of paper idea, intrigues reader)

\_\_\_\_And finally, **YOUR NAME IS ON THE PAPER!**

**ESSAY EXTENSION SKILL**

**Counter Arguments**

In your essay, you are creating an argument based on evidence. However, a different writer could take the same evidence and come up with a different interpretation, and therefore a different thesis.

A counter-argument is a rejection of an alternative thesis and your clear reasons why the evidence does not fully support that alternative thesis.

TO CONSIDER:

1. You are NOT arguing against yourself, but strengthening your argument by rejecting an alternative point of view.

2. Do NOT argue against made up “straw men.” Only argue against another thesis statement that has been clearly laid out by another historian.

7th Grade:

Acknowledge other possible interpretations in the introduction and concluding paragraphs. This will help make your thesis clearly by distinguishing it from an alternative point of view.

8th Grade:

1. Introduce the counter-argument in your body paragraph before your thesis statement.
2. Your last body paragraph should address the counter argument. Support your counter-argument by using specific evidence and elaboration. Show that the evidence does not support that alternate claim.

**PROOFREADING: REVISING v. EDITING**

The main difference between experienced writers and beginning writers is their approach to the first draft. Beginning writers hit spell check, quickly read it over, and hit print. Experienced writers think of the first draft as a sketch that can be improved upon.

When you proofread, you must REVISE **and** EDIT.

**Editing** is checking for grammatical errors and writing style.

**Revising** is adding information, questioning your argument, and thinking like a reader. You should think of the paper as a whole, seeing how the pieces fit together, and determining if there is enough information to support your argument.

**Some strategies for proofreading:**

* **Spell check** using the computer - Beware this is not always sufficient to catch all errors such as correctly spelled homophones (red/read);
* **Print** a hard copy of your essay to mark with Proofreading Marks.
* Read paper **aloud slowly** - Awkward or incomplete sentences become obvious when you read your paper out loud;
* **Track** your errors (tally whether the mistakes are with apostrophes, commas, run-ons…this will enable you to be more pro-active in your writing and avoid making these errors in the future);
* Correct for only one category of error at a reading (i.e. spelling or grammar or punctuation);
* **Put the writing away** for a while and then revisit it with **fresh eyes** - this can help you find mistakes that you didn’t notice before.
* Try to put yourself into the shoes of someone who knows nothing about your topic. Would this paper contain enough information to understand the argument? **Try reading it to someone who is not in your class.**

EXAMPLE ESSAY RUBRICS

**Required Elements:**

1.5 or Double Spaced\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (-5%)

Graphic Organizer or Outline Completed\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (-20%)

Turned in on time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (-10%/day)

**Content:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | E (missing) | D (poor) | C (fair) | B (good) | A(Excellent) |
| 1st paragraph historical background for an unfamiliar reader and previews arguments in body paragraphs. (Optional: Addresses counter arguments) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1st paragraph contains clear thesis statement |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 middle paragraphs discuss different elements that support the thesis |  |  |  |  |  |
| Each paragraph has a main idea and is supported by detailed information |  |  |  |  |  |
| Details are given that go beyond the obvious or predictable analysis |  |  |  |  |  |
| Conclusion restates thesis and discusses overall effectiveness of poster |  |  |  |  |  |
| Writing is clear and understandable |  |  |  |  |  |
| Strong and specific vocabulary |  |  |  |  |  |
| Correct spelling and punctuation |  |  |  |  |  |

**Total Points**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

EXAMPLE RUBRIC FOR BILL OF RIGHTS ESSAY

REQUIRED ELEMENTS: (-5 points if not completed)

\_\_\_\_\_1.5 pages

\_\_\_\_\_Double Spaced

\_\_\_\_\_12 point font

DUE DATES (-5 points if not completed)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_All stages of paper were completed on time

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Content: 45 points | E (missing) | C (needs lots of revision) | B (needs minor revision) | A (needs very minor or no revision) |
| Introduction paragraph defines a Constitution, explains its organization, previews main ideas. |  |  |  |  |
| Introduction paragraph contains a strong and clear thesis statement that is consistent with body paragraphs. |  |  |  |  |
| Three body paragraphs have argumentative topic sentences. |  |  |  |  |
| 1st body paragraph discusses the rights in amendment, origins, and importance of right. |  |  |  |  |
| 2nd body paragraph discusses the rights in amendment, origins, and importance of right. |  |  |  |  |
| 3rd body paragraph discusses the rights in amendment, origins, and importance of right. |  |  |  |  |
| Conclusion restates thesis and explains life without these three amendments. |  |  |  |  |
| Writing contains clear, specific language. |  |  |  |  |
| Writing has no spelling or grammar errors. |  |  |  |  |

ESSAY REFLECTION SHEET

Your goal when writing essays should not be to write one perfect essay, but to use this assignment to become a stronger and clearer communicator of complex ideas. The best way to do this is to set goals and to reflect after receiving critical feedback.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is the strongest aspect/part of your paper?

2. What is one area you could have improved upon?

3. What part of the writing process (thesis writing, research, note-taking, organizing, writing, revising) did you find the most challenging? Why?

4. Why do you think you got the grade that you did on this assignment? Do you agree with your teacher’s assessment of your essay? Why or why not?

5. What might you try to do differently on the next writing assignment you have? Explain.

DEVELOPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

So far you have been working on writing skills where you have not done any original research, and where the teacher has given you a clear direction about what type of thesis statement they are looking for.

But some assignments force you to discover your own sources and to write your own thesis statements based on that evidence.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

**The goal** of the research process is to help you understand what type of information you are looking for BEFORE you begin surfing the web or digging through library books. **Effective research means answering specific questions, not just collecting facts**. To do so, you will need to develop a set of questions that will help you meet your objectives.

What would an effective research question look like? Let’s use the subject of many lengthy books - the Civil War - to illustrate the process of creating an effective research question. Because the Civil War is such a vast topic, perhaps you decide to look at just one battle. Even to answer the question “What happened at the Battle of Gettysburg?” thoroughly, you would have to write a book. Therefore, it is important to **narrow down your topic** to a question that can be researched and addressed in an historical essay or other middle school project.

At all points during this process, you must **be flexible.** By the end of this process, you may not end up writing the paper that you originally intended. This is because at different stages of researching and revising, you will find yourself changing your focus or discovering new information that changes your point of view. While researching, you might also discover that there is not enough information available on your original topic and thus you may need to refine your investigation. **Changing your research question and your paper’s focus during the research process shows that you have been sharpening your thinking and deepening your understanding of that topic.** This is exactly what your teacher wants from you!

1. Start with a broad topic of interest to you: Which of the topic choices are you thinking about studying? Why?

Example: I’m thinking of studying Valley Forge.

2. Prior knowledge: What do you already know about this topic that can help you?

Example: George Washington was involved. I think it’s in Pennsylvania. It was winter and there was lots of snow. The soldiers nearly froze to death.

3. Explore basic information. Read **WITHOUT** taking any notes. Just read, and try to get a sense of your topic. This may take up to an entire class period!

4. REFLECTION:

A. Did you find enough understandable information to get a basic understanding of your topic? If not, why not?

B. Assuming you found enough information, write down the “Who, What, When, Where, Why, How” of your topic below. If you cannot generate this basic summary, go back and read some more.

WHAT is your topic about?

WHO was involved?

WHEN did it happen?

WHERE did it happen?

HOW did it take place?

WHY did it happen?

5. Narrow down your topic—you cannot know or report on everything about your research topic. Think about what is most important or interesting.

Is there a part of the event or topic that interests you more than others? Why? Did you learn something surprising that you now want to learn more about?

Write your narrowed-down topic focus here:

*Example: I am interested in how the soldiers managed to survive the winter at Valley Forge or how this experience affected the outcome of the War.*

6. Create a thesis statement (or argument):

*I am trying to learn about (topic)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because I want to find out (narrowed-down topic)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, so that other students will understand (your thesis or argument) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*

*Example: I am trying to learn about Valley Forge, because I want to find out how American soldiers survived the winter so that other students will understand that Americans few resources meant Continental soldiers faced hardship during the war.*

FINALIZED RESEARCH/THESIS STATEMENT:

*Example: American soldiers suffered great hardships during the Revolutionary War.*

**NOTE: This is your thesis statement! Check with pages 19-21 to see if you have been successful.**

7. SPECIFIC FOCUSING QUESTIONS

In order to fully answer and explain the research statement above, write down **focusing questions that directly relate to your thesis statement above.** For example, if you were studying Revolutionary War Medicine, one question could be “How were the doctors educated at the time?” or “How did they treat a bullet wound?“ How many questions you will need depends on the assignment.

FINDING, ANALYZING, and DOCUMENTING

SOURCE MATERIAL

If you just completed the research process, than you probably already found a few sources you plan on using and taking notes from. Even still, you should follow the steps below to avoid struggling through difficult or not useful source material.

1. PRE-SEARCH

This is simply a “thinking step” that asks you to imagine what a perfect source would look like. Chances are this perfect source does not exist, but having it in mind can prevent you from picking up sources that do not meet any of your criteria.

Now that you have a set of workable focusing questions, stop and think about what type of sources you will need to conduct your research.

\* Where do you think you will find the information?

--The Internet? A database? Your school's library? The town library?

\* Do you think you will find sufficient information on the topic written for middle and high school students?

--Consider length, vocabulary, audience, and visuals.

\* What would the "perfect source" for this topic look like?

--Consider materials that are focused on your topic area, easy to locate, readable, and well-organized.

2. FIND AND ANALYZE SOURCES

A. ANALYZING PRINT MATERIAL:

After you have identified several sources in the library, page through them, look at the index, table of contents, read the jacket cover, look for visuals, and finally, ask yourself the following questions:

\* Are these sources useful?

\* Do these sources meet my expectations of what I thought I would find?

\* Can I understand the information and the vocabulary within these sources, or is it too complex?

\* At first glance, do these sources look like they provide enough information to answer my focusing questions?

\* Would it be useful to revise my main research question knowing what I now know?

These questions are often difficult to answer, especially if you are inexperienced at completing research projects. However, getting into the habit of asking yourself these questions will help you identify better sources in the future.

B. ANALYZING INTERNET MATERIAL

When working with the Internet, students need to exercise caution. While many sites out there have been created by reputable institutions, many more have been created by people whose information has not been checked for accuracy. For every credible and accurate website, there are five other websites out there with inaccurate or incredibly biased information. Remember, with limited training, anyone can build a website in a few hours.

One of your goals during this research process should be to become a savvy Internet “shopper.”

The following checklist will help you determine if a website is worth using.

**Authority/Bias:**

1. Can you determine who composed the site? YES or NO

2. Does the information seem to be even-handed? YES or NO

3. Is the author’s reason for writing it clear? YES or NO

4. Is it closed-source? YES or NO

*(Meaning only the author can edit it, unlike wikis)*

**Content:**

1. Is the information accurate and current? YES or NO

2. Were there links from reputable sites to this site? YES or NO

3. Is the information well-written? YES or NO

4. Is the information cited? YES or NO

**Quality:**

1. Is the website well-designed? YES or NO

2. Do all of its links work? YES or NO

3. Are the pictures high quality and relevant? YES or NO

If you answered NO to more than two or three of these questions, think twice before trusting this site. With that said, there are MANY valuable sites on the Internet.

**QUICK GUIDE TO INTERNET SOURCES:**

**Sites You May Always Use:**

PBS.org; Library of Congress and its American Memory site; Worldbook Online; whitehouse.gov; nytimes.com and other credible newspapers; the National Archives; National Park Service; many university sites; the Avalon Project; and many more.

These websites have been made by credible institutions whose goal is to educated the public with accurate, balanced, and relevant information.

**Also**, your library website is full of useful databases. These are collections of previously published material, and therefore can be trusted in the way that books from your library can.

**Sites Meriting Caution:**

1. Websites that appear to have an abundance of good information but are **poorly designed**. *Use the checklist on the previous page to determine whether or not you should trust it.*

2. **Wikipedia.org**—This is usually a useful place to start research and to gain background knowledge, but be careful when including facts from this source in your final product.

Wikipedia is an open-source encyclopedia that anyone can edit. Since anyone can edit it, it may contain wrong or biased information. **Information in your library or in published books has been vetted by numerous people, and can therefore always be trusted.**

When using wikipedia, check the citations on the bottom of the page. Click on the website links, and double-check that the websites cited on the wikipedia page are credible. (See page 18 for a checklist on determining website credibility.) Often, information on wikipedia pages are copied and pasted from other websites.

**Sites that should NEVER be used in historical research:**

1. Blogs—*These are always opinion and are never vetted. While fun to read, they hold no place in history research.*

2. Websites from radical organizations—*The information is always biased and usually inflammatory. Many of them have been blocked at school, but not all of them. Ask your teacher if you think you may have stumbled upon a site like this.*

3. Classroom project websites-- *These websites may have inaccurate or incomplete information.* Look for website addresses that end in "k12.xx.us."

TAKING EFFECTIVE NOTES

Once you find your sources, it is a good idea to take down the bibliographic information so that you can find it again. We are going to skip that step for now, but see later pages for how to write a proper bibliography (Works Cited) page.

The next step is to actively read your research materials. **Active reading** involves looking for relevant information, identifying your confusions about the topic, making connections, and paying attention to your personal reaction, i.e. what surprises or intrigues you.

If you have done this, you are now ready to begin taking notes.

Here are some aspects of note taking that are common to all good researchers:

**1. Write down the bibliographical information about the source (at least author, title, and page number) on your notes—**This will help you avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism and let you or your audience find the information.

**2. Differentiate between a summary (information broadly stated and paraphrased) and a direct quotation of the author's words—**mark down whether the ideas are your own or the author's ideas.

**3. Be selective—**write down only information that you think will be useful in answering your research questions. Be on the lookout for information that you hadn't initially asked about, but that may end up being relevant to your project, i.e. illustrative quotations and pertinent statistics.

**4. Be flexible, i.e. don't be surprised if the focus of your paper changes and initially relevant evidence is no longer useful—**Just because you write notes down does not mean that you have to use this information in your final product.

**5. Be brief—**Write your notes in simple, abbreviated language. There is no need to be grammatically correct when jotting down notes unless you are taking a direct quotation.

Every researcher takes notes differently. Below, you will find some common methods, each with strengths and weaknesses. Try them both out to find which is most effective for you.

There are many note-taking formats you can use. Here are three (3) common methods used in Brookline.

A. NOTECARDS:

Write down one fact or quote per notecard. After you are done, you will organize your notecards into piles for each focusing question. Each pile will become a section (i.e. paragraph) of your research paper.

Source: Hakim, Joy. War, Terrible War. P. 78

Joshua Chamberlain, Maine, led Union troops in the battle of Little Round Top.

Bibliographic Information

Fact that will support a focusing question.

The **most common mistake** made when using notecards is to misplace them. It is a good idea to keep them together in a ziplock back or a clasped folder.

A benefit of notecards is that you can easily visually arrange them when you are done, and can dispose of cards that you did not use.

B. NOTE-TAKING SHEETS

This system is similar to notecards, except that you write down facts from many sources on one note sheet. The sheets are organized by focusing question. This is a good method for beginners who have trouble staying organized.

OPTION 1:

Focusing Question:

How did the northern troops defend Little Round Top?

Source: Fact:

Foner 4 Chamberlain out of bullets; bayonet charge

Denman 31 Southern forces almost wiped out after charges.

Sears 187 Chamberlain charged; southerners caught off guard.

What other information might I need to answer this research question?:

One question per sheet

Limit number of facts per sheet to 5-8.

Answer honestly!

OPTION 2:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| FOCUSING QUESTION: | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Order # |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | One Fact per Line |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Source |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Page # |

C. NOODLETOOLS—Online Notecards

Noodletools is a fantastic online notecard tool that can be used by both middle school researchers and doctoral students. It can be a little time-consuming at first, but it will help you create a research paper of the highest quality. It is especially useful for projects longer than five paragraphs.

To access Noodle Tools:

1. Go to www.noodletools.com

2. On the top right hand side, click on "Current Users."

3. Click on "Create a Personal ID"

4. Choose option "account linked to a school/library subscription..."

5. Ask your teacher about the School Name and password.

6. Create your profile with your teacher's instructions.

7. Double-check that your profile is correct by clicking on "My Account."

To use Noodle Tools:

1. When starting a new research project, click on "Create New List."

2. Choose MLA Starter.

3. Under Description, name your research project, such as "Battle of Berlin."

4. You will come to a page that says "Works Cited." Every time you locate a source, you will need to create a citation for it. You only need to do this once for every source. Pick the type of source you are using from the drop down list.

5. Fill out as much information as you have to create your citation.

6. You can either create more citations, or take notecards at this point. To create a notecard, click on "new" link in your list of sources.

7. Create a notecard title that will remind you of what information is on there and enter the page numbers.

8. You can create a "tag" which groups your notecards together. A good strategy is to create tags with your focusing questions.

9. For each notecard:

a. Write down either a PARAPHRASE or a QUOTATION, or both.

b. My Ideas: Include why you took down this information, and how you plan on using it.

10. At any time, share your notecards with your teacher, who will instruct you on how to do this.

11. When you have several notecards, go to the “Table Top.” You can create an outline in the side margin and drag your notecards in, or you can drag notecards on top of each other to create piles. Start organizing your cards early so that it is not overwhelming when you have a few dozen of them.

CITATIONS and BIBLIOGRAPHIES

The only guaranteed way to avoid Plagiarism!

I. What is plagiarism?

The Plagiarii were Mediterranean sea pirates who would kidnap children and sell them into slavery. It is from these sea pirates that we find the Latin root for *plagiarism* which literally means “to kidnap.” When you plagiarize an author's words or ideas, you kidnap his or her thinking and claim it as your own. Citations are required in order to avoid plagiarism and its consequences, such as a failing grade and loss of respect.

There are other good reasons not to plagiarize. Since research, i.e. arguments supported by evidence, is thinking on paper, plagiarism therefore deprives the reader the opportunity to make his or her own meaning about an historical topic . Without knowing your sources, it becomes impossible for the reader to draw their own conclusion. The audience assumes that your argument is not credible if it is not based on evidence that all can see.

Authors provide citations to indicate where they got specific information to support an argument. When authors do not cite the sources of their information completely and correctly, they are in danger of committing plagiarism. (Often times, plagiarism is unintentional – largely because **one forgot to cite a piece of information.)**

II. How can you avoid unintentional plagiarism?

1. When taking notes, keep track of your sources.

2. When taking notes, distinguish between quotes, paraphrasing, and your own ideas.

3. Cite information clearly, using either footnotes or endnotes.

4. Create an accurate bibliography

**III. What information must you cite?**

Cite the following types of information so your readers can better assess your argument. Different teachers and different disciplines have different standards for citations, though, so it is usually better to over-cite than under-cite.

ALWAYS CITE:

\* **A direct quotation:** *eg.* *Washington believed that the Western Pennsylvania settlers lived "no better than cats or dogs* (Brinkley 208)**."**

\* **A paraphrase:** *You took someone else’s ideas and put them into your own words. You still need to give the author credit for their idea!*

**\* A summary of someone else’s main ideas:** *eg.* *In The Great Fire, Jim Murphy suggests that the fire that swept through Chicago in 1871 represents one of the most colossal disasters in American History* (Great Fire 23).

\* **Supporting data or statistics**: *eg. Over 620,000 soldiers were killed on both sides in the Civil War* (Kolchin 72).

\* **A specific little-known fact:** *eg*. *Did you know that the Plagiarii were Mediterranean sea pirates who would kidnap children and sell them into slavery? It is from these pirates that we take the Latin root for* ***plagiarism,*** *which literally means “to kidnap”* **(**Greiner et. al. 23**).**

UNNECESSARY TO CITE:

It is not necessary to cite common, everyday knowledge that most readers would know.

*eg.* *World War II was fought between the Allied and Axis Powers.*

*eg.* *George Washington was the first President of the United States.*

*eg.* *Industrialization was very important to transforming America into a wealthy nation.*

Remember, your audience is usually other students in your class. If you think that most other students will know something, then you do not need to cite it.

**IV. Methods for Citing Information**

There are three principal methods for citing information in historical writing. These differ primarily as to **where** your reader will find the citation. Your teacher will tell you which method to use.

While all three of the above citation methods are employed in different educational settings, in Brookline we have decided to focus on the correct usage of parenthetical citations in our historical research and writing.

**A. Footnotes**

Footnotes are citations that appear at the bottom of the page. Most word processing programs offer footnoting tools.

**B. Endnotes**

Endnotes are the same as footnotes, except that they refer the reader to the **end** of the document for the citation.

**C. Parenthetical Citations**

Also called “In-text” citations, these citations appear immediately following the sentence containing the cited information. A shorthand reference of the source goes in the parentheses, and the complete information for the source will go in the bibliography

**How to use Parenthetical Citation:**

1. A book with one author-- Use author’s last name and page number.

Ex. (Tegnell 5)

2. If using two books by the same author—Use book’s name and page number.

Ex. (Voices 75) and (American Lion 348)

3. Two author’s—List both author’s names and page number.

Ex. (Tegnell and Petry 123)

4. Three or more author’s—Use first author’s name followed by “et al.” and page number.

Ex. (Kolchin et al. 111)

5. A website—Put first line of website address

Ex. (www.pbs.org/thewest/)

**What this looks like in your document:**

Ex. During the Civil War, more than 600,000 Americans were killed and hundreds of thousands of more were wounded (Petry 46).

**OR**

Ex. According to Petry, more than 600,000 Americans were killed during the Civil War (46).

V. BIBLIOGRAPHIES (WORKS CITED)

All of the above methods of citation of sources require the creation of a bibliography (Works Cited) page. A bibliography is the complete list of all the sources that you used in researching your topic. A bibliography contains information that helps readers know where they may find more information about the topic you discussed. A bibliography is also an additional means of documenting the authenticity and relevance of your research. If you used noodletools, you can just print out a bibliography and skip this step.

Here are examples of how to correctly reference different types of sources in a bibliography:

BOOK:

Author's name, last name first, followed by a period. Title underlined, followed by a period. Place of publication, followed by a colon. Publisher's name, followed by a comma. Copyright date, followed by a period.

*Example:* Murphy, Jim. The Great Fire. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1995.

SIGNED ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLE:

Author's name, last name first, followed by a period. Title of the article in quotation marks, followed by a period. Title of encyclopedia, underlined, followed by a period. Copyright date of edition, followed by a period. Volume followed by a period.

*Example:* Dickinson, Robert E. "The Norman Conquest." World Book Encyclopedia. 1990 ed. Vol. N.

(If there is no author, leave it out.)

*Example:* "Vietnam." Compton's Encyclopedia. 1992 ed. Vol. V.

MAGAZINE ARTICLE:

Author's name, last name first, followed by a period. Title of article, in quotation marks, followed by a period. Title of magazine, underlined, followed by a period. Date of issue (month, then year), followed by a comma. Pages, followed by a period.

*Example:* Sterling, Jeffrey. "Apartheid in South Africa." The World & I. April, 1986, pp. 27-35.

NEWSPAPER:

Author's name, last name first, followed by a period. Title of article, in quotation marks, followed by a period. Title of newspaper, underlined, include city if necessary in parentheses, followed by a comma. Date (day, month, year) followed by a comma. Page, followed by a period.

*Example*: Adams, George. "Ford's Plan to Spur Republican Revival." Christian Science Monitor (Boston), 29 Nov. 1974, p. 20.

Example: "How to Measure Justice." The Tennessean (Nashville), 19 Aug. 1979, p. 8

WEBSITE:

Author of page, last name first, followed by a period. Title of page in quotes, followed by a period. Title of the entire website, underlined, followed by a period. Online in brackets. The full URL address of the page, beginning with http://, followed by the date you visited the site in parentheses, followed by a period.

Example: Grimes, Barbara F., ed. "South Africa." Ethnologue. [Online]

http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/countries/Sout.html (4 Feb. 1999).

If you have utilized another type of source that is not listed here, such as an interview or a CD-Rom, please see your teacher for proper bibliographic reference formatting.

**SETTING UP A BIBLIOGRAPHY PAGE:**

1. Arrange your sources alphabetically by first letter of source.

2. Indent second and third lines of citation.

OTHER TYPES OF HISTORY WRITING

Not every piece of history writing needs to be a research essay. Often times, your teacher will ask you to utilize different writing formats for you to demonstrate your understanding of the past. These are often more creative approaches, but still require accuracy and rich details to accomplish their goals.

**I. HOW TO WRITE A DIARY ENTRY or HISTORICAL LETTER:**

When you are writing a diary entry or letter, your history teacher wants you to prove that you understand the details of a person’s everyday life. The object is to get inside a person’s head, and to imagine how they would think about and respond to different situations. Your goal is to include details of your surroundings and describe them using as genuine a “voice” of your historical character as is possible.

Please note that this type of writing will have you write in the FIRST PERSON, pretending you are that historical actor.

Some details you might want to include:

- Food

- Housing

- School/Work

- Type of people that you might meet (races, religions, etc.)

- How religion affects your life (religious laws, going to religious institutions, etc.)

- News you would have read about or heard about

- Clothing that you are wearing.

- How many people are in your family

- Weather

- Geography

- Type of travel that you could take (boat, walking, train, plane, car, etc.)

- Type of communication you could use (letters, phones, telegraph) and how long it takes to communicate.

- Fun details that make the historical actor more human (a funny anecdote, emotions they are experiencing, etc.)

Have fun with it, and remember to be creative AND historically accurate.

**II. HOW TO WRITE A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ON AN HISTORIC EVENT:**

The purpose of writing a newspaper article is to prove that you can identify and explain different interpretations of an event that historical actors might have had at the time. The article should be fact based. It should be written in past tense, but portray the event as if it has just happened.

To get started on writing a historical newspaper article, use the same process for developing research questions as you would an essay.

Then, be sure you can answer the following:

- WHO?—who was involved in the event, who is effected by it?

- WHAT?—what happened?

- WHEN?—When did it happen? What is the overall stretch of time that the events took place? Is something else that is important simultaneously happening?

- WHERE?—make sure the reader understands this!

- WHY?—This is the trickiest part. What steps led to the event happening? What were the “big reasons” and what was the “spark that started it?”

- HOW?—This is our play by play. List the chronology of what happened so your readers understand the entire event.

The outline for a newspaper article will look a little different from an essay outline. The main difference is that most of the important information comes right at the beginning in a newspaper article. Imagine that your reader has a really short attention span and you want them to know as much about your story as possible.

The rest of your article will be filled with interviews from as many different angles as possible. For example, if writing an article on Cherokee Removal, you might invent quotes from Chief John Ross, a Cherokee farmer, a Georgian farmer, and President Van Buren, all showing a different perspective on this event.

Follow the steps on the next page for a successful newspaper outline.

**NEWSPAPER ARTICLE OUTLINE**

I. HEADING—this should be short and to the point, but still entice the reader to pick up your newspaper article.

II. SUBTITLE—Give a one sentence description of what happened. This is the absolute minimum that your reader should know, and it is similar to your articles thesis.

III. OPENING PARAGRAPH

A. Include the basic “**who, what, when, where, why**” in a few sentences.

IV. CLARIFYING PARAGRAPHS—

A. Write 2-4 paragraphs giving a detailed play-by-play of the event you are reporting on.

B. Write 2-4 paragraphs that give quotes (real or fictitious) from different historical actors and “man on the street” interviews that show how people interpreted the event.

V. Closing Paragraph—make a “prediction” about what changes or outcomes this event will cause to happen. (Of course, since you are writing this many years later, you will know what happened.) This is to show your reader that you know why this event was important.